



## THE CARTER CENTER

Countering Daesh Recruitment Propaganda Workshop 4

Gendering the Fight Against All Extremisms:

Creating Active Agents for Sustainable Change and Community Resilience

*March 2017*

### **Executive Summary**

On March 1 – 4, 2017, The Carter Center (TCC) convened the fourth and final Countering Daesh workshop. The workshops are designed to identify flaws in Daesh’s narratives, develop an approach to discredit Daesh propaganda and the rise of Islamophobia, and build capacity among





urging that rights-based approach to reintegration cannot materialize in a vacuum without grassroots activism and mobilization. To this end, human rights defenders have a major role to play in lobbying and advocating for policy change as well as cultivating positive relationships with Islamist organizations that work on reintegration.

### **Political and Social Strategies for Change and Action**

Ambassador Rasool, articulated the need for Muslim leaders to develop a value-based paradigm, inspired by the Quranic model, that inform their messages and actions. The values would include Quranic notions of justice, honor, dignity, tolerance, and coexistence. Adopting such a paradigm will permit Muslim leaders to foster solidarity and greater convergence among various communities of faith. Ambassador Rasool further highlighted that while Muslims are good at committing to principles and determining tactics, they fail at developing strategies that cut across ideological and political fault-lines. Participants agreed that to counter effectively all forms of extremism, Muslims must unify amongst themselves, understand their rights and duties as citizens, and strike partnerships with other social and political groups that promote peaceful coexistence. The strategy is to focus and build on the commonalities that Muslims share with their natural allies, and overcome any differences that might weaken the collective goal. After wide-ranging discussions, participants developed an implementation plan for future activities that captured their vision, strategic objectives, central challenges, and narrative-paradigm shifts. Participants ended on an optimistic note and vowed to follow through with this strategic plan to achieve policy outcomes in their respective countries.

### **Reclaiming the Narratives: Participatory Media and Citizen Journalism**

The final session focused on the importance of alternative media platforms in efforts for Muslims to reclaim their narratives. The twin threats of Daesh and Islamophobia pose challenges to Muslim communities around the world. Yet an unprecedented opportunity exists for Muslim communities to reclaim their voices. Muslims must endeavor to move beyond conventional media approaches and adopt innovative and media-savvy ways to populate the online space in a manner that discredits hate-driven rhetoric of extremists. Participants reflected upon the need to revise their approach in countering Daesh propaganda, with one noting “even though Muslim leaders have made progress in countering Daesh’s narratives, most responses have been dense and hyper-rational.” Acknowledging this limitation, Dr. Abadi stressed that an effort is missing to respond simultaneously to the strong emotional appeals that Daesh generates.

The session also examined the role of citizen media in combating Islamophobia, which is fueled by the use in the western media of crude and exaggerated stereotypes to portray Muslims. Diversification of how Muslims are presented can help combat such negative characterizations. Dr. Abadi presented the example of an American Muslim couple, who, after the San Bernardino and Paris attacks, launched a campaign called #AskAMuslim to fight Islamophobia. The couple designed creative ways to engage in dialogue. These efforts were shared on social media, including Facebook, and reported in local and national news outlets. The effort resulted in the creation of a movement that has presence in universities. Dr. Abadi emphasized the importance of using creative methods to counter all extremism. Participatory media and citizen journalism have the potential to empower individuals and raise collective societal consciousness. However,

